

The death and resurrection of Osiris are more naturally explained by the annual decay and growth of vegetation.

myth to apply. Thus Renouf, who Identified Osiris with the sun, admitted that the Egyptian sun could not with any show of reason be described as dead in winter.¹ But if his daily death was the theme of the legend, why was it celebrated by an annual ceremony? This fact alone seems fatal to the interpretation of the myth as descriptive of sunset and sunrise. Again, though the sun may be said to die daily, in what sense can he be said to be torn in pieces?²

In the course of our inquiry it has, I trust, been made clear that there is another natural phenomenon to which the conception of death and resurrection is as applicable as to sunset and sunrise, and which, as a matter of fact, has been so conceived and represented in folk-custom. That phenomenon is the annual growth and decay of vegetation. A strong reason for interpreting the death of Osiris as the decay of vegetation rather than as the sunset is to be found in the general, though not unanimous, voice of antiquity, which classed together the worship and myths of Osiris, Adonis, Attis, Dionysus, and Demeter, as religions of essentially the same type.³ The consensus of ancient

¹ P. Le Page Renouf, *Lectures on the Origin and Growth of Religion*² (London, 1884), p. 113.

² The late eminent scholar C. P. Tiele, who formerly interpreted

Osiris as a sun-god (*History of Egyptian Religion* ^ pp. 43 sqq.), afterwards adopted a view of his nature which approaches more nearly to the one

advocated in this book. See his *Geschichte der Religion im A?tertian* ^ i. 35 sq. ^ 123. Professor Ed. Meyer also formerly regarded Osiris as a sun-god ; he now interprets him as a great vegetation god, dwelling in the depths of the earth and causing the plants and trees to spring from it. The god's symbol, the *ded* pillar (see above, pp. 108 sq.) he takes to be a tree-trunk with cross-beams. See Ed. Meyer. *Geschichte des Altertums*, i. p. 67, § 57 (first edition, 1884) ; ²¹ ^ i-2 2. pp. 7⁵ 84, 87 (second edition, 1909). Sir Gaston Maspero has also abandoned the theory that Osiris was the sun; he now supposes that the deity originally personified the Nile. See his *His to ire* *ancienne** (Paris, 1886), p. 35 ; and his *Histoire ancienne des Peuples de FOrient Classique*, i. (Paris, 1895), p. 130. Dr. E. A. Wallis Budge also formerly interpreted Osiris as the Nile (*The Gods of the Egyptians* ^ i. 122, 123), and this view was held by some ancient writers (Plutarch, *his et Os iris* ^ 32, 34, 36, 38, 39). Compare Miss M. A. Murray, *The Osireion at Abydos* (London, 1904), p. 29. Dr. Budge now explains Osiris as a deified king. See his *Osiris and the Egyptian Resurrection*, vol. i. pp. xviii, 30 sq., 37, 66 sq., 168, 254, 256, 290, 300, 312, 384. As to this view see below, pp. 158 sqq. ³ For the identification of Osiris with Dionysus, and of Isis with Demeter, see Herodotus, ii. 42, 49, 59, 144, 156 ; Plutarch, *his et Osiris*, 13, 35 ; Diodorus Siculus, i. 13, 25, 96, iv. 1; *Qrphica*, Hymn 42; Eusebius, *Pracpar. Evang.* iii. 11. 31 ; Servius on Virgil, *Aen.* xi. 287 ; *id.*, on Virgil, *Georg.* i. 166; J. Txetxes, *Skol. on Lycophron*, 212; -Ai ^ ^juara, xxii. 2,